



May 12, 2003
National Women's Check-Up Day

Facts & Figures About Women's Health

Women & Heart Disease...

- ❖ Heart disease is the number one killer of American women. More women die of heart disease each year than men.
- ❖ One in three American women dies of heart disease. Women who recover from a heart attack are more likely to have a stroke or to have another heart attack than are men. In fact, 38 percent of women die within a year following a heart attack compared to 25 percent of men.
- ❖ Heart disease takes the lives of more women in the United States than stroke, breast cancer, ovarian or uterine cancer, and HIV combined.
- ❖ Stroke is the third leading cause of death for American women. Women are more likely than men to die from a stroke. Taken together, heart disease and stroke kill nearly twice as many American women as do all types of cancer combined.

Women & Cancer...

- ❖ Cancer is the second leading killer of American women.
- ❖ Since 1987, lung cancer has been the top cancer killer among American women, with an estimated 68,200 deaths in women expected in 2003. About 90% of all lung cancer deaths among U.S. women smokers are attributable to smoking.
- ❖ Breast cancer is the second leading cancer killer among women, with an estimated 39,800 deaths in women expected in 2003. Although lung cancer kills more women each year than breast cancer does, there are more new cases of breast cancer every year than lung cancer.
- ❖ Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in American women. An estimated 74,700 new cases of colorectal cancer in women and 28,800 deaths in women are expected in 2003.

Women & Diabetes...

- ❖ Diabetes mellitus is the fifth leading cause of death in women.
- ❖ An estimated 17 million Americans have diabetes. Only 11.1 million cases are diagnosed, 9.1 million women have diabetes, and about a third don't know it.





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Women & Obesity...

- ❖ 61% of adults in the United States were overweight or obese (BMI > 25) in 1999. In women, overweight and obesity are higher among members of racial and ethnic minority populations than in non-Hispanic white women. Overweight and obesity are associated with heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems, and psychological disorders, such as depression.
- ❖ 300,000 deaths each year in the United States are associated with obesity.

Women & Tobacco...

- ❖ About 23 million women smoke, which increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, cancers, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), low bone density, and reproductive health problems.
- ❖ Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a cause of lung cancer and coronary heart disease among women who are lifetime nonsmokers.

Women & Asthma...

- ❖ Each year nearly 500,000 Americans are hospitalized and more than 5,000 die from asthma. Adult women are far more likely than men to have asthma, and are also more likely to be hospitalized and die from asthma.

Women & HIV/STDs...

- ❖ Approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year in the United States, 30 percent of them among women. African-American women account for 64 percent of new HIV infections among women.
- ❖ Chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It causes an estimated 3 million infections annually. .
- ❖ Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because three quarters of infected women have no symptoms.





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More Information About *Asthma*

Asthma is more than just a chronic disease of the lungs. If not managed carefully and treated right away, it could cause death. A person with asthma may suffer from a coughing, wheezing, a tight feeling in the chest, and trouble breathing. While asthma cannot be cured, it can be controlled. Women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant should also speak to their health care providers about the effects of asthma during pregnancy.

- ❖ Each year nearly 500,000 Americans are hospitalized and more than 5,000 die from asthma. Adult women are far more likely than men to have asthma, and are also more likely to be hospitalized and die from asthma. African Americans are also at a higher risk to be hospitalized for asthma and are more likely to die from asthma than other Americans.

What Causes Asthma?

Today, the causes of asthma are better understood. Both the genes people inherit and their environmental surroundings cause asthma. Many people with asthma have allergic reactions to particles breathed in through the air or allergens such as animal dander, waste products from dust mites and cockroaches, and pollen. Other common causes of asthma attacks include, mold, cigarette smoke, air pollution, exercise, stress, infections due to cold or flu, changes in weather, strong odors from painting or cooking, scented products, and even certain foods and medicines.

What to Do About Asthma...

Women who suffer from symptoms of asthma should talk to their health care provider. Follow these steps to control your asthma:

- ❖ Talk to your health care provider about treatments for asthma.
- ❖ Avoid things that will trigger your asthma, such as cold air, dust, mold, feathers, and cigarette smoke.
- ❖ Take your medicines as prescribed.
- ❖ If your asthma symptoms get worse, act quickly. Know which medicine to take and when to get help.





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More Information About *Cancer*

Cancer is the second leading killer of American women. When combined, lung, breast and colorectal cancers are estimated to kill more than 137,000 American women in 2003.

Lung Cancer

- ❖ Since 1987, lung cancer has been the top cancer killer among American women, with an estimated 68,200 deaths in women expected in 2003.
- ❖ About 90% of all lung cancer deaths among U.S. women smokers are attributable to smoking. Exposure to "second-hand" smoke also increases the risk of lung cancer in non-smoking women.
- ❖ The best way to prevent lung cancer is to never smoke or stop smoking.

Breast Cancer

- ❖ Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in American women and the second major cause of cancer death. An estimated 39,800 deaths in women are expected in 2003.
- ❖ The exact causes of breast cancer are unknown. Risk factors for breast cancer include increasing age, personal or family history of breast cancer, alcohol consumption, certain breast changes, genetic alterations, estrogen, dense breast tissue, and obesity after menopause. Breast cancer is also more likely in women who do not have children, have a first child after age 30, women who began menstruation before age 12, took hormone therapy for long periods of time, and women who completed menopause after age 55.
- ❖ Women ages 20-39 should perform monthly breast self-examinations (BSE) and have a clinical breast exam (CBE) by a health care provider every 3 years. Women age 40 and older should perform a BSE every month, and should have a screening mammogram and a CBE by a health care provider every year.

Colorectal Cancer

- ❖ Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in American women. An estimated 74,700 new cases of colorectal cancer in women and 28,800 deaths in women are expected in 2003. It is sometimes called a silent killer because a person can have no symptoms at the start of the illness.
- ❖ The exact cause of most colorectal cancer is unknown. Risk factors include age (over 50), a diet high in fat and calories and low in fiber, a history of polyps, a personal or family history of colorectal cancer, smoking, inactivity, obesity, and inflammatory bowel disease.



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- ❖ At ages 50 and older, women should get:
 - A yearly fecal occult blood test AND/OR
 - A flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years (with fecal occult blood test is preferred) OR
 - A colonoscopy every 10 years OR
 - A double-contrast barium enema (DCBE) every 5 years (if not having colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy)
 - A digital rectal exam with each screening (sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, or DCBE)
- ❖ It is also important to maintain a healthy diet that is low in fat and high in fiber.



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More Information About *Cardiovascular Disease*

Heart attacks and strokes, while different conditions, both are caused by a lack of blood flow. A heart attack, caused by coronary heart disease, occurs when blood flow to the heart is critically reduced. Lack of blood flow to the brain from a blood clot, or bleeding in the brain from a broken blood vessel, causes a stroke. Sometimes called a "mini stroke," a person can also have a transient ischemic attack (TIA), which raises the risk for a full stroke.

- ❖ Heart disease is the number one killer of American women. More women die of heart disease each year than men.
- ❖ Almost twice as many women die from cardiovascular disease (mostly heart attacks and strokes) than from all forms of cancer combined.

Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease

- ❖ Cardiovascular disease affects women of all racial and ethnic groups, however, African American women are more likely to die from heart disease than other groups of women. Smoking, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, inactivity, increasing age, family history of heart disease, obesity and diabetes are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Reducing Your Risk

There are several steps you can take to reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease:

- Don't smoke or quit if you do.
- Keep your blood pressure below 140/90 mm Hg; below 130/85 mm Hg for people with kidney damage or heart failure; or below 130/80 mm Hg for people with diabetes. Ask your health care provider about how often you need your blood pressure checked.
- Eat healthy.
- Lower your cholesterol to the right level, based on your personal risk.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Ask your health care provider what a healthy weight is for you.
- Have a normal fasting blood glucose level (below 110 mg/dL). Ask your health care provider when you should be tested. If you have diabetes, monitor and control your blood sugar levels.
- Talk with your health care provider about your heart disease risks and your family's heart disease history.





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What to Watch Out For

- ❖ Signs of Heart Attack
 - Chest discomfort or uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in center of chest that lasts longer than a few minutes, or comes and goes.
 - Spreading pain to one or both arms, back, jaw, or stomach.
 - Cold sweats and nausea.
- ❖ As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to have some of the other warning signs, particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain.
- ❖ Signs of a Stroke
 - Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
 - Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding speech.
 - Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
 - Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.
 - Sudden severe headache with no known cause.
 - Blurred or double vision, drowsiness, and nausea or vomiting.
- ❖ Similar to a heart attack, not everyone gets all of these warning signs. Sometimes, these signs can go away and return. Every minute counts, even if the symptoms seem to disappear. Treatments are most effective if given within one hour of when the stroke begins. If you have these signs, call 911 right away!





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More Information About *Obesity*

A growing number of women are overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, breathing problems, arthritis, gallbladder disease, sleep apnea (breathing problems while sleeping), osteoarthritis and some cancers. However, by losing weight an individual can reduce or overcome many of the health problems caused by obesity.

- ❖ Nearly one-third of all American adults are obese. Of these, about 33 percent of adult women are obese. This rate is particularly high among African American (50 percent) and Mexican American women (40 percent). (www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/20021008b.html)

Overweight or Obese?

Overweight and obesity levels are measured with a Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI shows the relationship of weight to height. Adults wanting to calculate their BMI can use a BMI table available at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/calc-bmi.htm.

- ❖ Women with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 are considered overweight, while women with a BMI of 30 or more are considered obese.
- ❖ All adults (aged 18 years or older) who have a BMI of 25 or more are considered at risk for premature death and disability from being overweight or obese.
- ❖ Overweight and obesity result from an imbalance involving excessive calorie consumption and/or inadequate physical activity. For each individual, body weight is the result of a combination of genetic, metabolic, behavioral, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic influences.

How to Control Your Weight

The Surgeon General suggests the following steps that can be taken by an obese individual to reduce her body weight and improve her overall health:

- ❖ Aim for healthy weight. If a person is obese, losing 10 percent of body weight can improve health.
- ❖ Work with your health care provider to create a program to help you lose weight successfully and safely.
- ❖ Be active. Physical activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week is very important for weight control and overall health improvement. However, you should check with your health care provider before starting any physical activity program.
- ❖ Eat a balanced diet. Eat smaller portions and foods that are lower in fat and calories, and follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines call for eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Try to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day, and choose foods that are low in saturated fats, and not high in sugar or salt.



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More Information About *Diabetes*

Diabetes is a dangerous disease that is often not taken seriously. People suffering from diabetes have high levels of blood sugar, which, if ignored, can lead to grave consequences such as heart attack, stroke, blindness, limb amputation, kidney failure, and even death.

An estimated 17 million Americans have diabetes but only 11.1 million cases are diagnosed. 9.1 million women have diabetes, and about a third don't know it. Women increase their risk for diabetes with older age, being overweight/obese, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, having a sibling or parent with diabetes, giving birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds, and having diabetes while pregnant. African American, Native American/Alaska Native, and Hispanic American/Latina women are at a higher risk for diabetes.

There are three forms of diabetes:

- ❖ Type 1 Diabetes - when the body does not produce any insulin.
- ❖ Type 2 Diabetes - When the body does not make enough insulin or use insulin well. Most people with diabetes have type 2.
- ❖ Gestational Diabetes - Diabetes that develops during pregnancy.

What Are the Warning Signs?

There are several warning signs of diabetes that women should watch out for. These include going to the bathroom a lot, feeling hungry or thirsty all the time, blurred vision, weight loss without trying, cuts/bruises that are slow to heal, feeling tired all the time, very dry skin, and tingling/numbness in hands or feet.

Managing Diabetes...

Diabetes is a disease that can be managed through regular care. Taking care of diabetes every day can help prevent other health problems that diabetes may cause, such as problems in the eyes, kidneys, nerves, gums and teeth, feet, legs, blood vessels, and heart. Following are some steps that women can take to control diabetes:

- ❖ Eat healthy foods.
- ❖ Exercise (30 minutes most days of the week is best). Exercise helps the body's insulin work better.
- ❖ Take your medicine. Sometimes people with diabetes need to take pills or insulin shots. Patients should follow directions and talk to their health care providers about the medicine's side effects.
- ❖ Check your blood sugar (ask your health care provider how often you should check it).
- ❖ See your health care providers regularly. Don't forget about the dentist and eye doctor!
- ❖ Don't smoke.
- ❖ Control your blood sugar and cholesterol levels, your blood pressure, and your weight.
- ❖ Check your feet everyday for blisters, red spots, swelling, or cuts.
- ❖ Stay aware of how you feel-if you notice a problem, call your health care provider right away.



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More Information About *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a severe health problem in the United States. The latest estimates indicate that there are approximately 15 million new STD cases in the United States each year. And while some STD rates, such as syphilis, are at all time lows, rates for genital herpes, gonorrhea, and chlamydia continue to spread throughout the population.

- ❖ Approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year in the United States, 30 percent of them among women. African-American women account for 64 percent of new HIV infections among women.
- ❖ Chlamydia is the most commonly reported sexually transmitted disease in the United States. An estimated 3 million contract chlamydia annually. By age 30, 50 percent of sexually active women probably have had chlamydia.

(This is from a non-federal resource, so we tried to instead rely on CDC information, where available.)

- ❖ Forty percent of chlamydia cases are reported among young people, 15 to 19 years old.
- ❖ At any one time, an estimated 20 million people in the United States have genital human papilloma virus (HPV) infections that can be transmitted to others.
- ❖ Genital herpes-herpes simplex virus type two (HSV-2)-is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the United States, with as many as one million people in the United States becoming infected each year.
- ❖ An estimated 650,000 cases of gonorrhea occur each year in the United States.

How STDs Affect Women

By far, women bear the greatest burden of STDs, suffering more frequent and more serious complications than men.

- ❖ Some STDs can have no apparent symptoms, which can be particularly harmful for women. For example, if left untreated, chlamydia will develop into pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can lead to infertility. Chlamydia also can cause eye disease and pneumonia in infants. Moreover, women infected with chlamydia are more likely to become infected with HIV, if exposed.
- ❖ Each year in the United States, more than 1 million women experience an episode of acute PID. More than 100,000 women become infertile each year as a result of PID, and a large proportion of the ectopic pregnancies occurring every year are due to the consequences of PID. More than 150 women die from this infection every year.



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- ❖ Even when an STD causes no symptoms, a person who is infected may be able to pass the disease on to a sex partner or to an unborn child.
- ❖ Some STDs, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, can spread into the genital tract and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which in turn is a cause of infertility, ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, chronic pelvic pain, and abscess formation.
- ❖ Human papillomavirus (HPV) sometimes causes genital warts but in many cases, infects people without causing noticeable symptoms. There are 30 distinct types of HPV that can infect the genital area. Of these, some types cause genital warts, and others cause subclinical infections, which cannot be seen. Genital warts are extremely common, but can be treated and cured. Subclinical HPV infection is more common than genital warts, and there is no cure. The disease can lead to cervical, penile and anal cancer.

Preventing & Treating STDs

- ❖ Sometimes people are too embarrassed or frightened to ask for help or information. Some STDs are readily treatable, and the earlier a person seeks treatment, the less likely the disease will do irreparable physical damage or be spread to others.
- ❖ To prevent STDs: Do not have sex. If you have sex, use latex condoms. Being in a long-term relationship with 1 person who has been tested for STDs and does not have any STDs lowers your risk.



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More Information About *Tobacco & Smoking*

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It is a deadly epidemic that is causing serious health problems among women. About 23 million women smoke, putting them at increased risk for many smoking-related diseases.

- ❖ Teenage girls are smoking almost as much as teenage boys. Girls have less knowledge of the adverse consequences of smoking and the addictiveness of nicotine, believe that smoking can control weight and negative moods, and have a positive image of smokers. In 2000, 29.7 percent of senior girls reported having smoked in the last 30 days.
- ❖ Despite increased knowledge of the adverse health effects of smoking during pregnancy, pregnant women still smoke. Cigarette smoking during pregnancy declined from 19.5% in 1989 to 12.9% in 1998.

Smoking Causes Serious Health Effects

- ❖ Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among women, and smoking causes 90 percent of lung cancer deaths. Smoking also increases a woman's risk for heart disease, stroke, oropharynx, bladder, pancreas, kidney, liver, colorectal, and cervical cancers, asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, early menopause, and osteoporosis. In fact, for women younger than 50, the majority of coronary heart disease is caused by smoking. Smoking can cause reproductive problems. Smoking can also lead to trouble getting pregnant. Women who smoke during pregnancy risk pregnancy complications, premature birth, low-birth-weight infants, stillbirth, and infant mortality.
- ❖ Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a cause of lung cancer and coronary heart disease among women who are lifetime nonsmokers.

The Commitment to Quit

The benefits of not smoking start within days of quitting, and the damage caused by smoking can be often be reversed by quitting smoking completely.

- ❖ The lungs start improving just a few weeks after quitting.
- ❖ You can smell and taste things better 2 days after quitting.
- ❖ The chances of getting heart disease is cut in half one year after quitting. In fact, 15 years after quitting, the chances of getting heart disease are the same as someone who has never smoked.



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- ❖ The risk of lung cancer is cut in half 5 years after quitting.
- ❖ After 5 to 15 years of not smoking, the risk for stroke decreases to that of women who never smoked.
- ❖ Women who want to stop smoking can talk with their health care providers about getting help to quit and, medicines that can help with symptoms of withdrawal..

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